(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) whether the formulation is fraught with dangers, giving unfettered powers of control of public undertakings to the bureaucracy and eliminating their accountability to Parliament; if not, what checks are contemplated on such powers and to ensure accountability?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (SHRI YASHWANT SINHA): (a) No, Sir.

(b) and (c) Do not arise.

Austerity in Government Expenditure

1774. SHRI BHAGABAN MAJHI: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have issued instructions to every Ministry, Pubic Sector Undertaking and Government Department to curb wasteful expenditure;

(b) if so, what are the guidelines prescribed for them; and

(c) the' details of the austerity measures proposed to be adopted by Government?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (SHRI YASHWANT SINHA): (a) to (c) The exercise of curbing wasteful expenditure in Government is a continuing one and instructions in this regard are issued and reiterated from time to time. The latest guidelines on expenditure management, fiscal prudence and austerity issued in August 1998 broadly envisage the following:

(1) Budget formulation should lay greater emphasis on explicit recognition of the constraint of resources and a realistic projection of the allocations required and budgetary ceilings should be rigidly adhered to.

(2) Unauthorised expenditure over and above the appropriations should be severely dealt with and responsibility fixed.

(3) Implementation of various schemes should be oriented towards achieving the end-objectives rather than merely incurring expenditure to avoid savings and surrenders.

(4) Better control over release of funds to autonomous bodies based on actual utilisation of funds already provided and their absorptive capacity.

(5) Reduction of establishment expenditure to the maximun possible extent.

(6) Postponement of all avoiadable seminars, conferences, workshops, etc.

(7) Restrictctions on foreion visits on study tours and for attending workshops, seminars, conferences, etc. funded by the Government.

(8) Imposition of a 10 per cent cut on non-salary items of non-plan expenditure, viz. Travel Expenses, Office Expenses, Petrol, Oil and Bubricant, Overtime Allowances, Honorarium, etc.

Loan to SC/STs

1775. SHRI GANDHI AZAD: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) what is the number of SC/ST persons to whom loan has been advanced by the Nationalised Banks till October, 1998; and

(b) the percentage of the loan advanced to the SC/ST persons as a whole by the Nationalised Banks?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (BANKING, REVENUE AND INSURANCE) (SHRI KADAMBUR M.R. JANAR-THANAN): (a) and (b) As per the latest data available from Reserve Bank of India (RBI), under priority sector, public sector banks have advanced Rs. 6849.65 crore in 94.50 lakh accounts of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes as on the last Friday of March 1998, constituting 7.5 per cent of the total priority sector advances of these banks.